

In the Claims:

Please amend Claim 26 as indicated below. The status of the claims is as follows:

1-21. (Cancelled)

22. (Previously Presented) A vacuum processing apparatus comprising:

a floor panel;

a fixing block connected to the floor panel;

a vacuum chamber provided on the floor panel;

a pair of vacuum pumps provided on the floor panel, said vacuum pumps being fixed to the floor panel near bottom portions thereof;

a pipe connecting the vacuum chamber to each of the vacuum pumps for evacuating the vacuum chamber;

a flexible pipe included in a part of the pipe;

an inlet pipe included in a part of the pipe for connecting the flexible pipe to each of the corresponding vacuum pumps; and

a mechanism that includes a bar fixed to each of a rising portion of the inlet pipes and a chain block fixed to a central part of the bar and the fixing block, said mechanism being connected via a first connection to the fixing block, at one end thereof, and being connected via a second connection to top parts of each of the vacuum pumps, at an opposite end thereof, wherein said mechanism is configured and arranged to

maintain a distance between the inlet pipe and the fixing block in an extending direction of the flexible pipe so as not to shrink the flexible pipe, in the extending direction, at a time of evacuation, wherein:

each of the vacuum pumps are provided in parallel with each other with a gap therebetween, and

the mechanism is provided between the vacuum pumps.

23. (Previously Presented) The vacuum processing apparatus according to claim 22, wherein:

the inlet pipe is provided on the top part of each of the corresponding vacuum pumps.

24. (Cancelled)

25. (Previously Presented) The vacuum processing apparatus according to claim 22, wherein:

the chain block is provided between the vacuum pumps.

26. (Currently Amended) The vacuum processing apparatus according to claim 25, wherein:

the inlet pipe is provided on a vacuum chamber-side ~~of~~of the top part of each of the corresponding vacuum ~~pumps~~pumps, and

the fixing block is provided between the vacuum pumps and on an opposite side with respect to the vacuum chamber.

27. (Previously Presented) The vacuum processing apparatus according to claim 22, wherein each of said vacuum pumps is seated upon a plurality of cushion members, which are positioned between said vacuum pump and an associated base member, and further wherein said base members are attached to the floor panel.

28. (Previously Presented) The vacuum processing apparatus according to claim 22, wherein said bar is a quadrangular bar.

29. (Previously Presented) The vacuum processing apparatus according to claim 22, wherein said chain block operates in a direction to expand the flexible pipe.

30-38. (Cancelled)